



Mount Gilboa Feasibility Study
Arlington, Massachusetts

Presentation to the Arlington Historic Districts Commission

Arlington Conservation Commission
Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC
Community Circle
January 25, 2024





Project Purpose:

To assess community visions for Mount Gilboa, focused on (1) understanding desirable uses for the structures at the top of the hill and (2) enhancing the property's ecological and conservation value.



Participants

Town of Arlington Department of Planning & Community Development

David Morgan, Conservation Agent

Town of Arlington Conservation Commission

Charles Tirone, Chair

Susan Chapnick, Vice Chair

Mike Gildesgame

Dave Kaplan

Brian McBride, Associate

Nathaniel Stevens

Davie White

Consultant Team

Martha Lyon, Martha Lyon Landscape Architecture, LLC

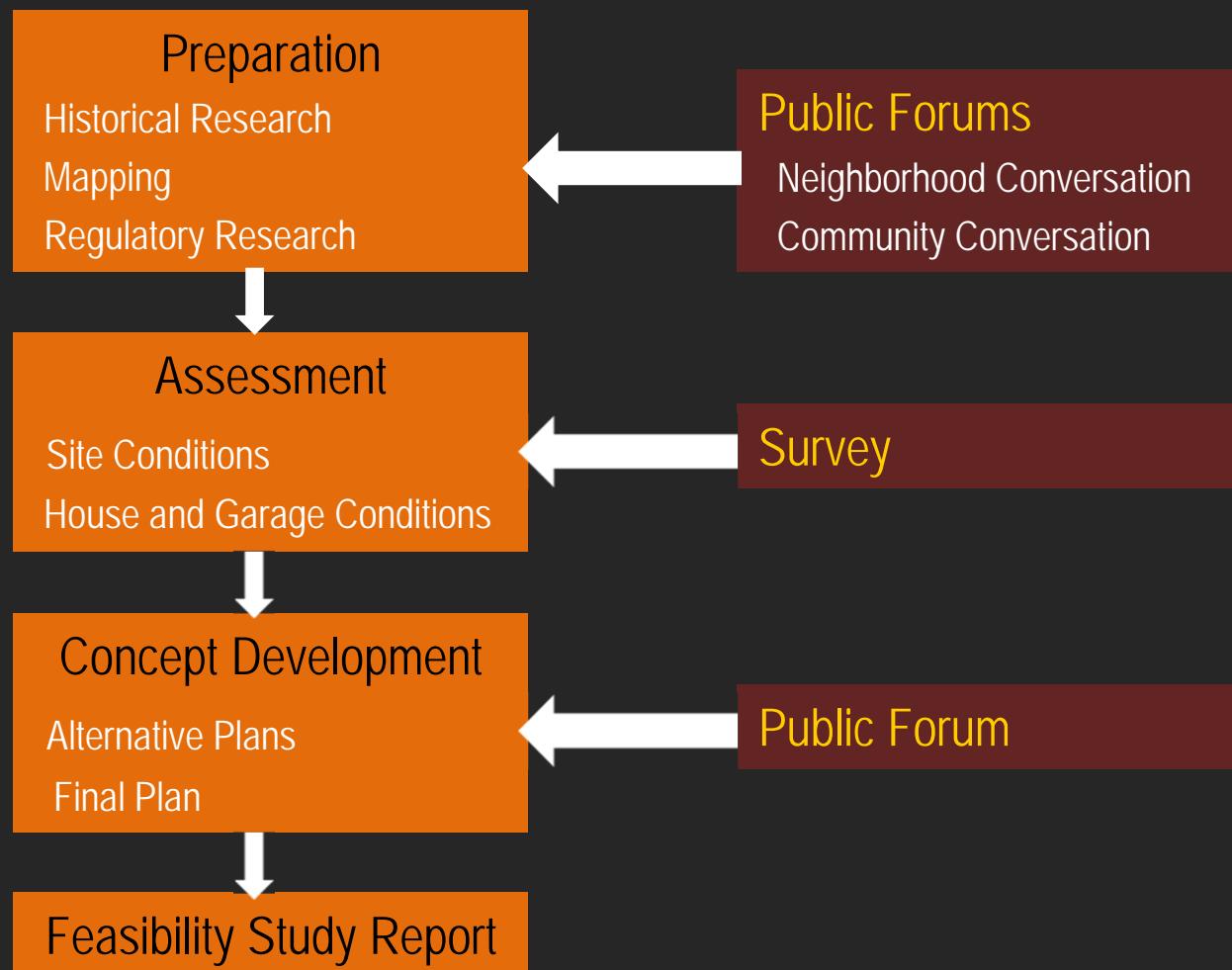
Daphne Politis, Community Circle

John Wathne, PE, Structures North Consulting Engineers, Inc.

Wendy Frontiero, AIA

Residents of Crescent Hill and the Town of Arlington

Study Process



Mount Gilboa is...

- One of Arlington's highest points with long views possible from its summit
- Made up of 8 parcels containing 10.2 acres of rocky, wooded terrain threaded with remnant stone walls
- Surrounded by the Crescent Hill neighborhood of Arlington Heights
- The largest property maintained by the Arlington Conservation Commission



Mount Gilboa is...

- Accessed from four entrances – Park Place, Madison Avenue, and two locations on Orient Avenue
- Often used by dog walkers and bird watchers using its $\frac{3}{4}$ mile of hiking trails



Mount Gilboa is...

- Site of the historic Lester Hayden house and garage, built in 1924
- A contributing resource in the Mount Gilboa/Crescent Hill Local Historic District

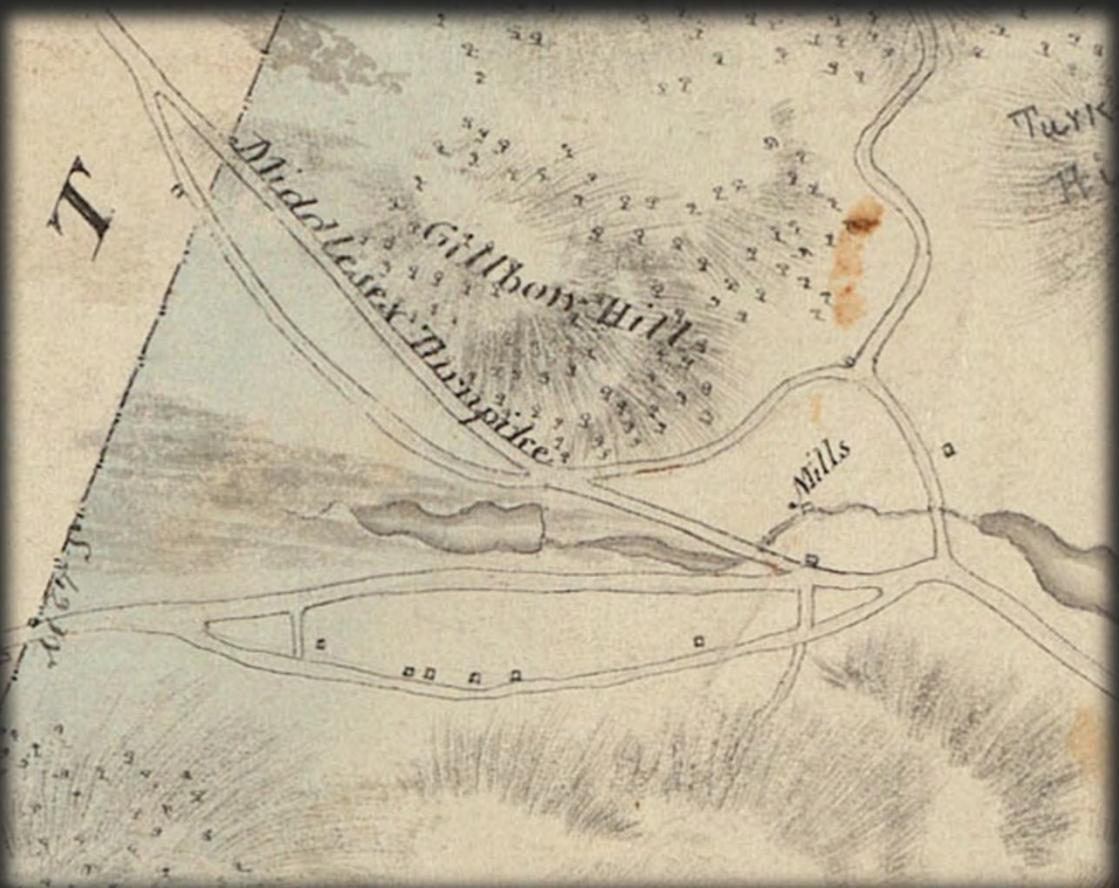
and...

- Much more



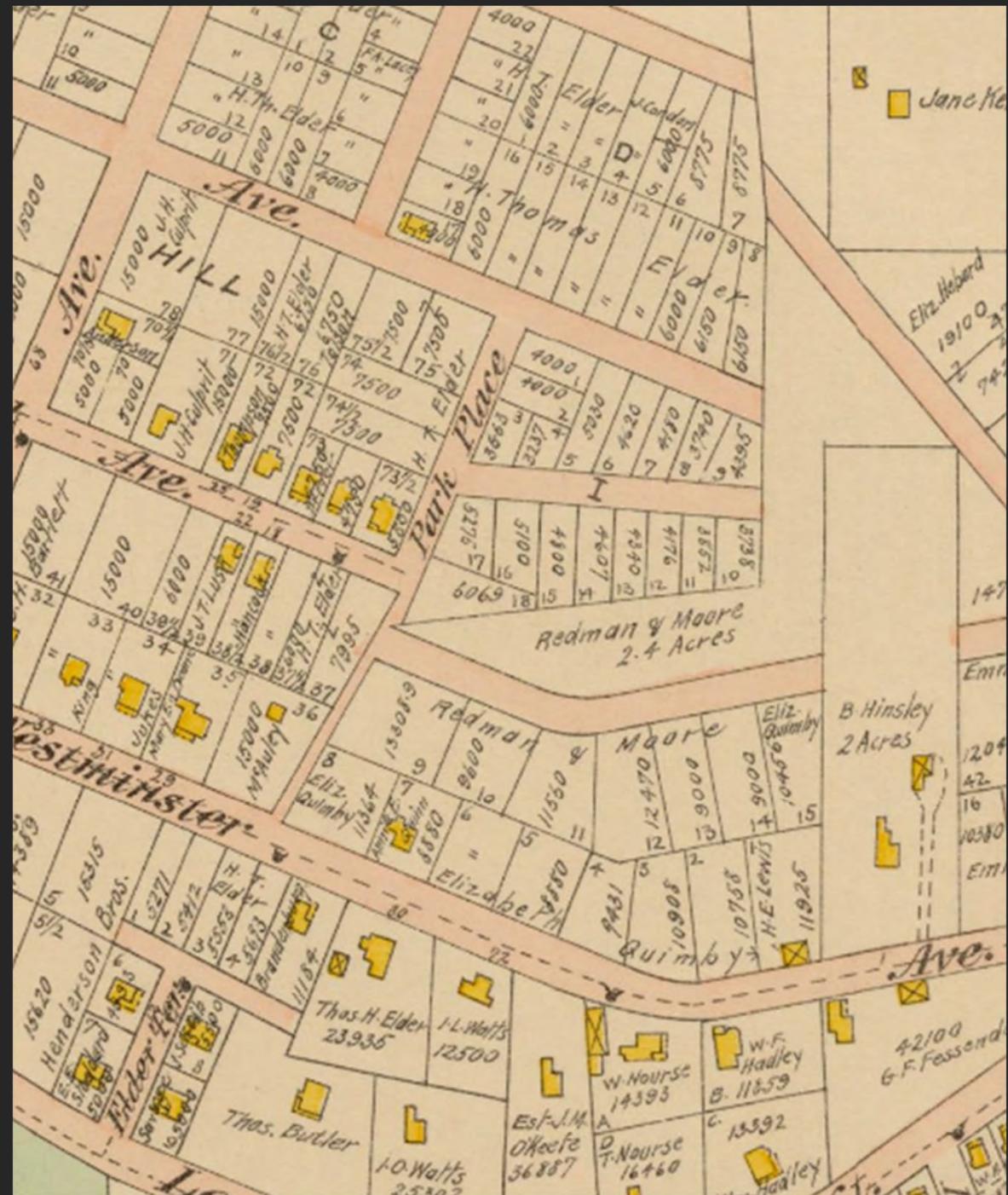
Mount Gilboa was...

- Likely a hunting and gathering ground for indigenous people
- Largely unsettled before the mid-19th century
- Likely named after the mountain range in Israel, overlooking the Jordan Valley



Mount Gilboa was...

- Part of an 1875 "cooperative plan" – 78 acres with hundreds of building lots, marketed to "working men"
- Instigators of the plan advocated for a park at the summit, the area marked "I"

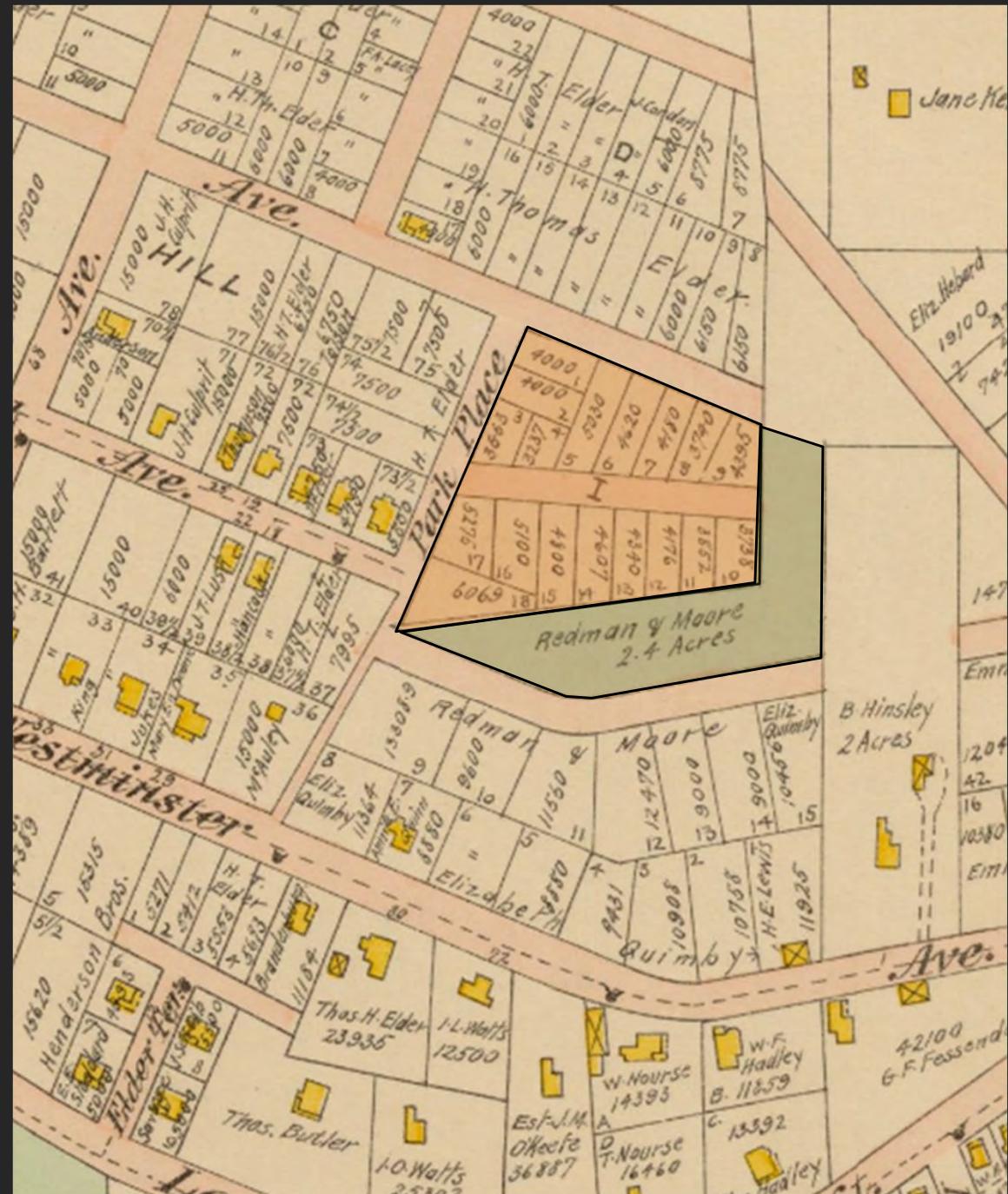




Exploring Mount Gilboa

Mount Gilboa was...

- By 1920, 18 lots were owned by Lester Hayden, approximately 2.14 acres; he purchased 1.07 additional acres in 1930



Mount Gilboa was...

- In 1924, he built a house on the summit. A mechanical draftsman, he drew the building plans and oversaw construction of the house



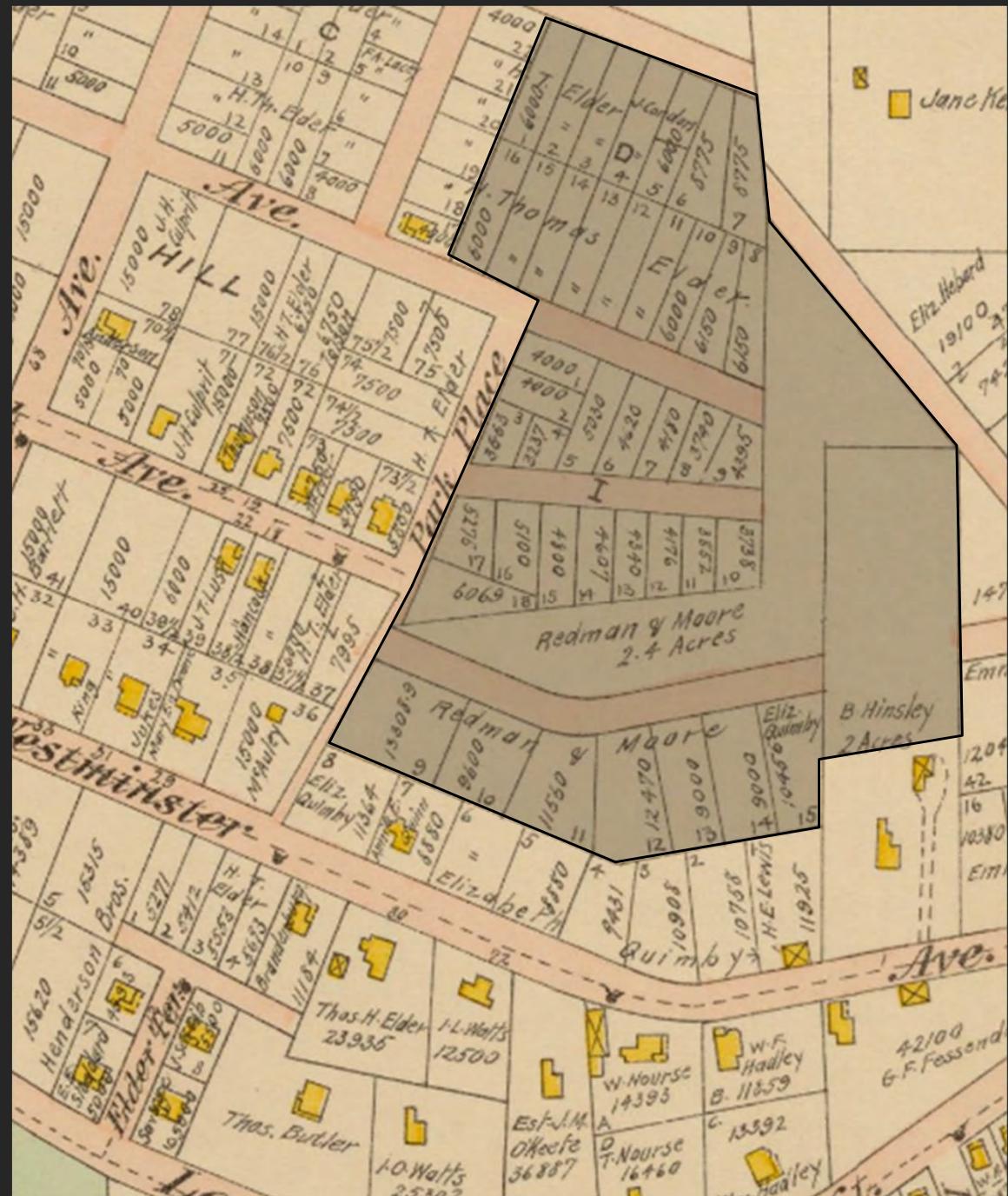
Mount Gilboa was...

- During the Depression, Hayden enlisted unemployed men to build the exterior staircase
- Hayden fabricated the lamps for the staircase posts
- In 1941-1942, Hayden and his wife Ruby harbored members of the U.S. military in their basement



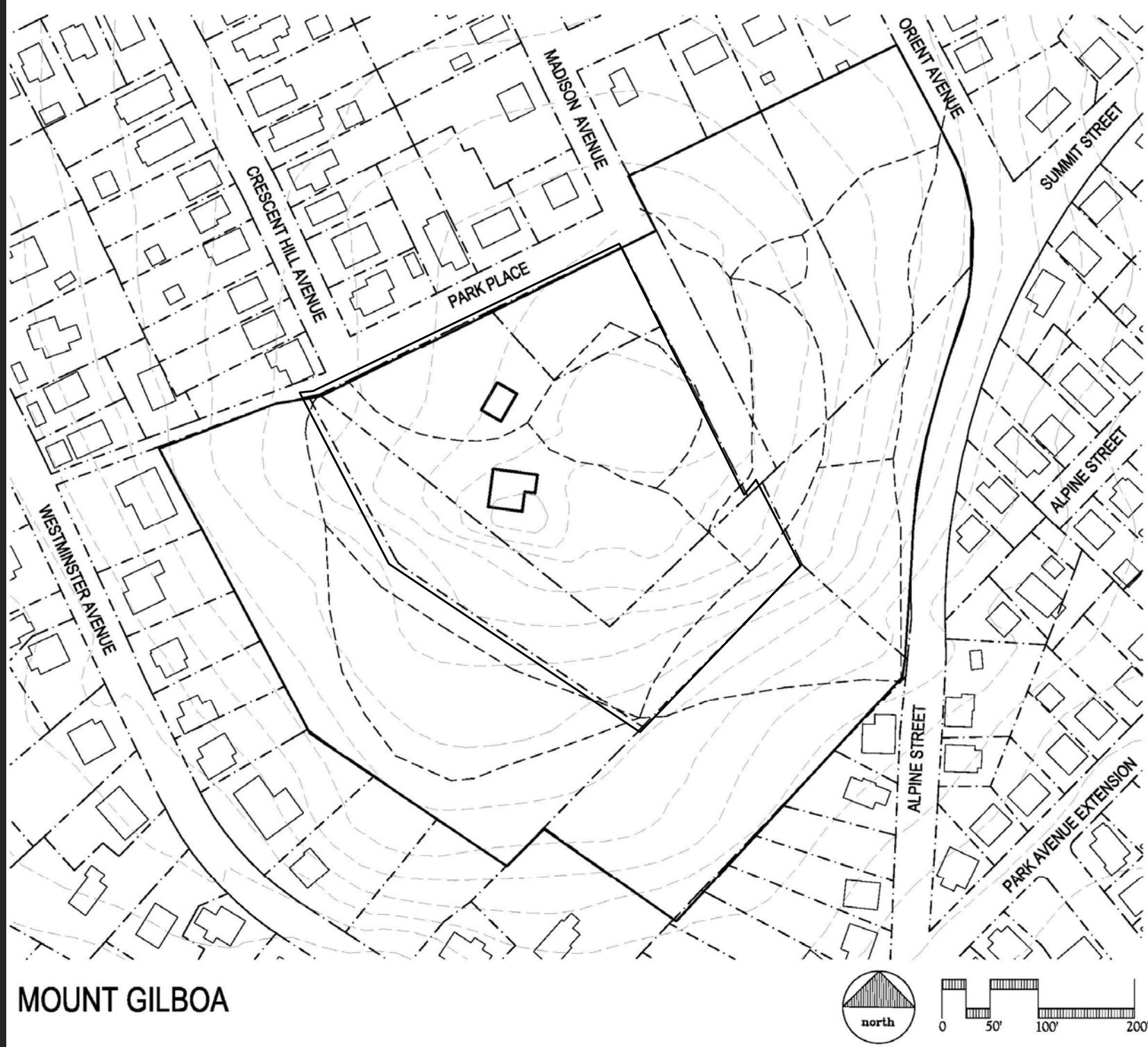
Mount Gilboa was...

- After Hayden's death in 1962, the property was sold.
- The town began purchasing land around the property, acquiring parcels in 1962 and 1968
- The final purchase, made in 1990, was of the original Hayden holdings, bringing the property acreage to a total of 10.2





Mount Gilboa
Conservation
Area today:
eight parcels
totaling 10.2
acres, the
largest open
space
managed by
the Arlington
Conservation
Commission





Summary of Public Input to Date:



A Feasibility Study of Mount Gilboa

GOAL: to make Mount Gilboa more accessible to the community, to enhance the property as a conservation asset, and to increase the educational and recreation amenities for the Town of Arlington

FACTS ABOUT MOUNT GILBOA



THE HOUSE

- The 1,960 square foot Lester & Ruby Hayden house was constructed in 1924 and is listed in the *Inventory of Historically or Architecturally Significant Properties in the Town of Arlington*.
- The house and environs are part of the Mt. Gilboa/Crescent Hill Local Historic District, established in 1991.
- The Arlington Historic Districts Commission (HDC) maintains jurisdiction over any construction or exterior alteration of the building.
- The HDC's Design Guidelines regarding historic buildings state that "structures, including additions and outbuildings, should not be demolished."
- Long-term maintenance of the house is a challenge for the town; the current condition has raised safety and liability concerns; the house has been vacant since 2021.
- The house does not comply with ADA regulations; entrances are not accessible, it does not contain an elevator, and the only bathroom is located on the second floor.



THE LAND

- The 10.2-acre site is protected under Article 97 of the Massachusetts constitution. A change in use requires an affirmative 2/3 vote from Town Meeting and a 2/3 vote from the state legislature.
- The entire site is zoned as Open Space. The purpose of this zoning district is "to protect and preserve open space as a natural resource, [to conserve] natural conditions for flora and fauna, and to serve as urban amenity for scenic and aesthetic enjoyment and recreation use."
- Structures within Open Space zoning districts, "where present, are clearly accessory to the principal open space and recreation functions of the property."

See the Town of Arlington website for additional information:
[Mount Gilboa Feasibility Study | News and Notices | Town of Arlington \(arlingtonma.gov\)](#)

- Site walk with Crescent Hill neighbors (December 2, 2023)
- Interactive forum with Crescent Hill neighbors (December 2, 2023)
- Interactive forum with residents from across Arlington (December 4, 2023)
- Email messages from individuals; Mt. Gilboa/Crescent Hill email thread
- On-line survey (in progress)
- Six-word stories (in progress)

Summary of Public Input to Date: Key Takeaways Regarding the Land

- Passion for keeping the wooded area of Mt. Gilboa as a **conservation area**, in other words, as natural as possible
- Interest in maintaining the property as a **shared neighborhood open space** resource, as an extension of residents' back yards
- Concern about Mt. Gilboa becoming a park, rather than a **reserve for wildlife and wildlife habitat**



Summary of Public Input to Date: Key Takeaways Regarding the House

- The house's **historic nature and contributions to Arlington's history** are important
- If rented as a private residence, it will become **unwelcoming** to the public
- Use as a public amenity will **increase traffic and parking** in the neighborhood
- Use as a public amenity will **disturb nature**
- The cost to update and maintain the house will add **financial burden** to tax-payers



For additional and ongoing information
about the
Mount Gilboa Feasibility Study:

see the Town of Arlington website :

Mount Gilboa Feasibility Study | News and Notices | Town of Arlington (arlingtonma.gov)



THANK YOU!